Abstract

This paper is a theoretical discussion of the link between Indigenous knowledge(s) and research methodology within the Interdisciplinary context of social work and education. The two primary questions of this paper are: "Is there a uniquely Indigenous methodological approach to research?" "What are the conditions within western academic settings that create space for this discussion?" This paper explores how the nature, depth, ways and substance of Indigenous thought impacts Indigenous research practices and explores how Indigenous researchers, having articulated their Indigenous theoretical perspectives and epistemological positioning, are able to find methodologies that are congruent with their worldview, research purpose and motive, and need for accountability to their Indigenous community. Integrated into the discussion is my own emerging research story as Indigenous person, of Plains Cree and Saulteaux heritage, who is currently engaged with academic research. Central to this discussion is the importance of creating space for Indigenous knowledge(s) and research methodologies in decolonizing the academy.

Introduction

In an article written several years ago, Eber Hampton, Indigenous scholar and researcher, wrote about the relationship between memory and research. He suggests that we go back in time to unfold the sacred medicine bundle that holds our memories and consider how they shape our personal truth. He said that to carryout Indigenous research, we ought to know our own motives and those motives can usually be found in our story (1995). This paper and my current research story centers on an inquiry into how Indigenous people approach research, an interest that grew out of my experience as a PhD Interdisciplinary Studies student (Social Work and Education) and from my work as a First Nations course developer and instructor for a First Nations Social Work research course at the University of Victoria.

However, if I were to reach further into my medicine bundle of memory, the attraction to research as a means of gaining knowledge and making meaning is embedded in my own personal story. I am a mixed blood woman of Plains Cree, Saulteaux and European descent. As an infant I was placed for adoption, a destiny that has allowed me to have strong relationships with two families from differing cultural locations. While my experience has been such that I am grateful for the abundance in my life, still my journey has been about searching to connect the dots of my own life. In Cree there is a word – *Miskasowin* – which, when translated, means to go to the centre of yourself to find your own belonging (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000). Much of my story has been about searching, about *Miskasowin*, and so it is no wonder that my personal and academic leanings would merge toward a curiosity about the research stories of others.

As I reflect upon the specifics of how Indigenous people approach research, I have found myself compelled by methodology. Over the last while, I have been grappling with methodological considerations of research with my first source of uneasiness arising from the term *methodology* itself. It is a word that seems so crisp and clean, a word that reminds me of anti-septic laboratory procedures conducted in tightly controlled environments. Within academia research methodologies encompass a range of fluidity though it remains strongly influenced by the western scientific paradigm, and while my understanding of its parameters hasn't come easy, I think I am finally getting it. The Cree word *tapewin* means to speak the truth clearly and with precision (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000) and to me this is about a lot of things, but these days mostly it is about methodology. It implies that one must know and be able to articulate one's own personal truth (or worldview) and from that place follow a path (methods) that is precise, clear and congruent with the worldview proposed. That we use methodology all the time occurred to me as a result of a conversation about this very topic.

A while ago I was talking with one of my supervisors about research methodologies and questioned whether all research used methodology. She said that from her perspective, every researcher has a methodological approach even if they do not spend a great deal of time on it. She said that it's one of those things, kind of like politics in that even if people say they are apolitical, they are still making a political statement. I had an "aha" moment, a realization that there is no getting around methodology in research, because it's about coming clean (explicitly or not) about values and designing research methods based on those beliefs. That being said, methodology, which seems simple enough, is not without its complexities and it can be messy, confusing,

frustrating, and even painful. It can also be truly sweet, for when the cosmos smiles and the trickster takes a break allowing for a brief moment of clarity and you've found a way to find out about something that fits with who you are and what you believe…well, methodology can be a rush. Somewhere bound in this experience is a metaphysical, spiritual variable that suggests the forces of the universe are working in synchronicity that defies the linearity suggested in its name: *methodology*.

This paper is about an Indigenous methodology(s) with special emphasis on Indigenous research within graduate programs. While it carries my own interpretations and analysis, it incorporates a small review of literature by Indigenous researchers from Canada and the United States and a summary of what they believe are key characteristics involved in an Indigenous approach (or methodology) to research. The second part of this paper is a discussion around creating space in the academy for this emerging discourse. The proposition presented here is that there is a methodological approach to research that is grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and that it is different from other western research methodologies that are used within Indigenous contexts. For example, Indigenous communities may seek out quantitative researchers to conduct research on behalf of their community using a western approach, and when accountable to the Indigenous community (e.g. community control) it can be helpful, useful research. However, the theoretical positioning within this paper is that this, in and of itself, does not constitute an Indigenous methodology(s). So what does a methodological approach grounded in an Indigenous worldview entail?

An Indigenous Methodological Approach to Research: What are Other Indigenous Researchers Saying?

For my doctoral research, I am seeking to ask six Indigenous people who are in the process of completing (or have completed) their PhD degree at a western university and have grappled with methodological issues. In preparing a proposal for this research, I conducted a short literature review of what Indigenous peoples were saying about their experience of carrying out graduate research. While the review focuses on how the Indigenous researchers incorporated the cultural (metaphysical) aspect of Indigenous ways of knowing into their research, I tried to experiment with *theory spotting*. *Theory spotting* is a term that I heard from one of my committee members, and I understand it to mean the action of listening to stories from others and seeing what shows up.

This section is a short excerpt from the literature which is a sample of sixteen published articles and excerpts[1] on Indigenous research by Indigenous authors. The majority of the articles were written in the last ten years (1995-2004) with two articles predating this time (1994, 1988) and each article was selected for this review because of their relevancy to Indigenous research. Each spoke directly to either Indigenous methodologies or epistemologies with the majority of the authors from Education and the Social Sciences. All of the authors participated in graduate studies

[1] Of Tuhiwai Smith, I only reviewed Chapter 10 of Decolonizing Methodologies for this review. Likewise of Atleo, I only reviewed the Introduction and Chapter 7 for this review.

research in a western university, and toward this end they have dealt with methodology in their Indigenous research.

So, "How are Indigenous researchers approaching their research?" and "What are the points of commonality?" The more I engaged with the literature, the more it became clear that there was a unique entity that can be called an Indigenous research way. In relation to Maori research practice, Tuhiwai Smith, suggests that Kaupapa Maori research is "both less than and more than a paradigm." (Smith, 1999, p.190). By this she infers that while it consists of certain principles, its' philosophical premise – based on Moari thought – is not reducible to finite parts. Rather it encapsulates a fluidity that intertwines itself within and around a paradigmatic structure in a non-linear way. Given this caveat, Indigenous researchers in the literature review refer to Indigenous research, in one form or another, as entailing a unique approach and to that end there were four integrated themes that consistently emerged as methodological guideposts grounded within Indigenous theory. They are:

1. Decolonizing, Political and Social Action aspect of Indigenous research
2. Personal Narrative and Self-location encompassing the high value of story-telling as a means to acquiring knowledge
3. Indigenous Languages, Philosophies and Theories as it influences the construction of knowledge
4. Cultural and Traditional Knowledge(s) that encompass the sacred and the spiritual

While each article may have focused on one of these elements, such as Russell Bishop's article on historical/critical perspective of Maori's experience with research (1997) or Richard Atleo's focus on Nuu chah nulth ways of knowing (2004), all of the articles in some way enfolded these four

components into their discussions in an integrated rather than discrete way when elaborating on Indigenous researching and knowing. This next section is a brief highlight of the literature review of the four key methodological considerations for Indigenous research.

Decolonizing, Political and Social Action Approach

All of the literature within this review placed the research conversation within the colonial history of Indigenous oppression, and acknowledged the political nature of this research (Cole, 2002; Graveline, 2000; Steinhauer, 2001). Ojibway scholar Roxanne Struthers succinctly summarizes the history of non- Indigenous research in Indigenous communities by saying it was not "managed in a germane manner" and that "aboriginal scholars refer to them as "research poachers" (2001, p. 127). Within a Maori context, Bishop states that often research benefits went to the researcher and "not to the people being researched."(1997, p. 36).

In providing a historical context, each author reminds that researching Indigenous peoples is a deeply political process. From a methodological perspective, there are two overriding political challenges for Indigenous graduate students in choosing methodologies. The first is to find an approach to research that is not extractive and which is accountable to Indigenous community standards on research. This arises most acutely in the matter of methods such as the gathering of data, who owns the raw data (e.g. the community, an individual) and how does data and findings return to the community. The second is that there is a fundamental, epistemological difference between western and Indigenous thought and this difference causes philosophical/political conflict for Indigenous researchers within academia. Eber Hampton describes the violence directed at

graduate students who hold alternative perspectives when approaching knowledge(s). For those of us from marginal places (like Indigenous graduate students) we feel as though our own experiences do not quite fit, and this becomes increasingly evident when we become entangled within graduate research processes. Hampton uses the analogy of the Cinderella story: "I like the analogy of Cinderella's slipper because we are not Cinderellas; the slipper doesn't fit" (Hampton, 1995, p.8).

There have been at least two types of politically motivated responses to the philosophical conundrum within western knowledge centers. Initially the response was to view traditional Indigenous systems of beliefs "as primitive, archaic and largely irrelevant"(Colorado, 1988); however, as Steinhauer suggests, an increasingly common response is to equate Indigenous knowledge(s) with a cultural exoticism (2002) and thus relegate it to a peripheral status away from the real work of knowledge construction. Both responses lead to marginalization of Indigenous knowledge(s), the latter – the Indigenous *exotic* – can have more disastrous implications as it can lead to a totemic understanding (and exploitation) of the more visible aspects of Indigenous culture without due consideration or understanding of the knowledge(s) upon which these traditions are based.

On the pragmatics of who owns and controls research, the political and methodological challenge of Indigenous research cannot be separated from the ethical aspects of it – the *Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (*OCAP) (Schnarch, 2004). Increasingly, Indigenous OCAP is coming up against the Academy's OCAP and it is causing a rub. A pervasive and primary consideration of Indigenous researchers is the need for Indigenous research to benefit, be responsible, give back, and serve their Indigenous community, hence the importance of Indigenous

research protocol development. Weber-Pillwax tells us that: "The research methods have to mesh with the community and serve the community" (2001, p. 128). While overall, the authors in this review did not attempt to define Indigenous community for others (Absolon & Willet, 2004) there was an overriding assumption that an Indigenous scholar/researcher ought to know who that means in her/his own terms. It is only in the context of community accountability that the "respect, reciprocity, and relationality" (Steinhauer, 2002, p. 73) of research occurs. By embracing these three principles – and adding the principle of responsibility - there is a natural answerability to the community, and as Cole suggests a link in one's heart and mind between research methodology and an ethical compassionate life (2002).

In summary, Indigenous researchers, know that research carried out under an Indigenous paradigm demands use of Indigenous knowledge(s) and methods, so how are we moving this effort along from a social/political perspective within the academy? In relating to Hampton's previously mentioned Cinderella shoe metaphor, I wonder what message we are offering about the methodological approach to Indigenous research. Are we squeezing into the offered shoe, but wearing it painfully? Have we found a way to massage the structure of the shoe to make it fit more comfortably? Do we think that the shoe should be thrown away altogether? Or does there need to be more shoes in general?

Narrative and Story

This significance of narrative and story (of self and others) as a component of Indigenous research seems to emerge consistently throughout the literature. This includes knowledge derived

from experience and revealed through stories, of which story-telling is a primary Indigenous research method (Steinhauer, 2002). This also references the intersection of personal narrative, voice and representation that necessitates self-location in Indigenous research (Absolon & Willet, 2004).

From this review, it became clear that the sharing of one's experiential knowledge (or self-location) as an Indigenous person is a critical aspect of constructing Indigenous knowledge(s). Absolon & Willett share with us that "remembering and talking" about their experience is "Aboriginal re-search" (2004, p.7) and they propose that our experience of being Indigenous, our identity factor, becomes a component of the conceptual framework that we bring with us to our research. Graveline argues that we must embrace our Indigenous voice, our narrative, as it is a part of our methodology (2000), while Struthers interweaves her personal story when relating her research methodology and findings (2001). This suggests that the Indigenous researcher needs to have a sense of who they are and where they come from in terms of self, culture, beliefs, values, life experience, memories, and so forth. This surmises the life-long, transformational nature of learning we gain throughout our life attuning us to how we access and use our personal knowledge(s).

Directly or indirectly, these researchers allude to the question that while anyone may conduct research within Indigenous contexts, can anyone incorporate an Indigenous methodology if voice is a central characteristic? And who gets to have an Indigenous voice? Responding to this question crackles with the prospect of Indigenous identity politics, yet there needs to be continued conversation. How we deal with the politics of this question internally as Indigenous researchers is

one matter; however, the centrality of personal Indigenous narrative within Indigenous research does seem to separate research that is done within an Indigenous context (by non-Indigenous/Indigenous using western methodologies) to research using an Indigenous methodological approach that integrates the Indigenous voice factor.

Indigenous Languages, Philosophies & Theories

Integral to the discussion of personal narrative is the primacy of language and oral tradition in preserving the unique nature of Indigenous philosophies. In relation to the connection between languages, culture and knowledge(s), Anne Waters offers some key insights into the structure of Indigenous languages and how form gives rise to a way of thinking/being. Waters indicates that dualist constructs such as like/unlike have resulted in a binary language and thought pattern in many European cultures (2004, p. 99). Conversely, in many Indigenous cultures, the language construct suggests a non-binary, complementary philosophy of the world. To assert the interrelationship between language and worldview and the impact of colonialism, Waters says:

> *In this way agents of Euro-American colonial theism wrenched Indigenous ontological constructs (embedded in the linguistic structures and thinking of the Indigenous mind) from Indigenist thought, causing a continental shake-down of the Indigenous worldview (2004, p. 102-103).*

Western research that serves to extract and externalize knowledge(s) in categorical groupings aligns well with the categorical premises of western languages. For if language both shapes and communicates thought, then as Waters suggests, the conflict between Indigenous and western research approaches (and its involvement in knowledge construction) rests within deep language

and the matter of dualist thought patterns. It is no wonder that, at times, Indigenous thought tends to dance around the sharp edges of the language binaries that define western methodologies. Given the philosophical basis of a complementary, non-binary Indigenous thought pattern, it makes perfect sense that narrative encased in the form of oral history/story would be the natural means to transmit knowledge(s) (Struthers, 2001). Within the structure of story, there is space for the fluidity of metaphor, symbolism, and interpretative communications (both verbal and non-verbal) for a philosophy and language that is less definitive and categorical. My sense is that in the old days as now, the skilled orators were able to imbue energy through word choice, and allow the listener to walk inside the story to find their own teachings. Traditional academic research, on the other hand, still has a craving to pinpoint the objective truth.

In considering Indigenous philosophy and languages, it is clear from the literature that language is a central component of Indigenous knowledge(s) and thus must be considered within Indigenous methodologies (Bishop, 1997; Struthers, 2001; Waters, 2004; Weber-Pillwax, 2001). There is a need for on-going conversation about how to incorporate not only the language, but also the philosophy from which that language flows into research. Many Indigenous people do not know their language and are attempting to relearn; however, it will take a lot of immersion to re-train our minds. Further, how to think/be in non-binary terms is a challenge when we live in a binary world. My guess is that very few can claim 'purity' here, and binary righteousness (you're a real Indian/you're not) around language seems to defeat the whole purpose (and what would the ancestors think?). So what do we do? Because language is central to knowledge construction, and knowledge construction seems to emerge from research processes how are we, as Indigenous

researchers, approaching the issue of philosophy and language in our research other than identifying its' importance? A very interesting question.

Cultural (metaphysical) Knowings

In each of the articles, the Indigenous researchers referenced the metaphysical as being a component of Indigenous knowledge(s). Ermine suggests that the Indigenous knowledge(s) include both inner and outer space. The outer space is the physical world and the inner space is where the metaphysical resides (1999). Evelyn Steinhauer, in quoting Marie Castellano, identifies Indigenous knowledge(s) as coming from a multitude of sources including "traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations" and goes on to say that revelations comprise "dreams, visions, cellular memory and intuition" (2002, p. 74). In discussing the components of Native science, Colorado states: "American Indian science is based on observation, experience, information and prayer. Native languages is key to it all" (1988, p. 58). Richard Atleo's theory of heshook-ish Tsawalk is "a theory of context" which "refers to the nonphysical and to unseen powers", a theory which recognizes that all aspects/variables within the universe are related and united. (2004, p. 117). Patricia Steinhauer emphasizes the teachings that come from all living and non-living entities, including that which lies within the cosmos (2001).

What these researchers are saying is that Indigenous people get information from many sources including spiritual places. Because of the interconnection between all entities, the process by which this information is sought ought not to be extractive rather it ought to be a reciprocal relationship of some manner to ensure an ecological and cosmological balance. Much of this

knowledge comes to an individual inwardly and intuitively. Ester Steinhauer cites the example of Elders not making important decisions until they had a chance to engage in ceremony and sleep on the matter, hence waiting for guidance through dream (2002), and there are multitudes of examples within Indigenous stories and writings that speak of the reliance upon this type of knowledge. Metaphysical knowledge is a central, integral component of Indigenous ways of knowing, so the question becomes how do the Indigenous researchers incorporate metaphysical knowledge into their research?

What is clear from the review of this literature is that Indigenous researchers are incorporating Indigenous metaphysics into their research design. In carrying out her research using a phenomenological methodology, Struthers wrote about honoring spiritual knowledge by offering a traditional gift of tobacco to her participants, as well as a daily offering of tobacco to the Creator. In preparing herself for the research –in gaining guidance as to whether she should continue with her research – she relied on dream knowledge that came to her in the form of three Ojibway grandmothers. Throughout her research she relied upon guidance from dreams and spirit. (2001). Atleo introduces the Nuu chah nulth method of *Oosumich*, which he references as a spiritual methodology equivalent to that of a vision quest. He says that western methodologies and *Oosumich* belong together as they are two proven methods of accessing information (2004).

With regard to data collection, Pam Colorado, cites Theresa Tuccaro as saying that one has to find the right spot for the an interview, where the person will fit. Colorado goes on to say: “True Native scientists actually see the “spot”” and “this ability stems from prayer, the hallmark of Indian science” (1988, p. 54). With regard to the interpretation of data, Patricia Steinhauer spoke of how

she "… was overcome by a strange feeling" (2001, p. 186) and intuitively knew she had to take a break from academia and her research to think about how to proceed. She was at a loss of how to interpret her interview data to ensure that the wisdom of the stories shone through. She remembered her research methods class by an Indigenous instructor who assigned students the task of spending an hour with a living object on campus (she chose a tree). At the time, she could not understand this assignment but in returning to her research she thought of the tree. The tree metaphor allowed her to interpret her research data in a way that honored the wisdom of the voices in her interviews (2001).

In my own research story, two experiences mark knowledge(s)coming from a non-rational, non-time sort of place that Vine Deloria talks about (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). The first happening was in relation to my own Indigenous identity. I was contemplating my mixed heritage and how this would impact on my research and questioned in my journal whether, given my experience, I could authentically approach Indigenous knowledge(s). I knew I had to square with being raised outside the culture, particularly if my research touched on cultural matters. In considering my identity, the metaphor of a white pearl necklace kept reappearing in my mind as indicative of a European worldview. There were a number of reasons for this but most significantly pearls have strong associations for me of my childhood in Saskatchewan. Not knowing what to do with these thoughts I wrote them down in my journal, including the pearl necklace metaphor. This was on a Friday in October, the following Sunday of that weekend I was walking out to the car to take a drive when I received a strange gift – hanging from the car door handle was a pearl necklace. I was

dumbfounded. It was the strangest synchronicity that I had ever experienced and I did not know what to make of it, I still wonder.

The second experience preceded the pearl necklace incident, and the knowledge came in the form of a dream. Without going into specific dream imagery, I dreamt of the Pueblo poet, Leslie Marmon Silko, who spoke to me about the importance of home and politics for Indigenous people. At the time of this dream, I was still foggy about my research direction and this dream would become a strong point of reference for my research journey. How do we quantify and validate these knowings within a western scientific approach to knowledge creation? Maybe we can't or shouldn't, but I do know that while I can't cite these experiences using a APA format or validate them according to a standard research protocol, they are huge in my own construction of knowledge.

A holistic model of Indigenous Research

From this review it was interesting to note that although I was not specifically looking for a model, a holistic approach to research seemed to arise out of the thoughts, reflections and writings by Indigenous researchers in an organic, non-didactic way. As I was carrying out my *theory-spotting* analysis of the four groupings, it occurred to me that they were taking the form of the four ways of being and falling into their own organic, holistic shape:

- *Physical* – Decolonizing, Social Action aspect of Indigenous Research
- *Emotional* – Personal Narrative and the Story-telling aspect of Indigenous Research
- *Mental* – Language and Thought as it influences the construction of knowledge aspect of Indigenous research.
- *Spiritual* – the Cultural, Metaphysical, Sacred aspect of Indigenous Research

While this research way is not incarcerated in a rigid structure of rules and dictums, it is a uniquely Indigenous methodological approach to research with guidelines – fluid perhaps, but present nonetheless. An invigorating phenomenon of the emerging Indigenous research discourse is the formation of an Indigenous research community within my own country (Canada) of individuals who are pivotal in the on-going conversation on Indigenous research. The question then becomes: "How do we create space in the academy for an Indigenous methodological approach to research?"

Creating Space for Different Ways of Knowing

In reflecting on creating space in the academy for Indigenous ways of knowing, my starting place is my own research story. While this story is not nearly done, I can attest to some forces that nurture emergent theories within universities, and I have to preface this discussion by saying that the daily gentle assurances are as necessary as the grand gestures. One of those gentle assurances made its way to me at the beginning of my doctoral study in the form of a pushpin note. Before being admitted to my program, I needed to identify possible graduate supervisors, and so made an appointment with a prospective supervisor. I remember walking into her office and being a visual person, I took note of the physical surroundings. It was a typical academic office with layers of books on a wall shelf and a filing cabinet with articles piled on top. As I moved to sit down, I remember looking up at her corkboard that was busily accentuated with different articles and signage of significance. In the left hand corner was a sheet of crisp, white paper with words, typed

in large Times New Roman font, centered on the page. The words were the lyrics from an old Leonard Cohen song – *Anthem*:

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

It is funny how at the time, a person can experience an event or take note of a sign and it doesn't register as significant, yet it sits with us. These kinds of knowings seem to surface because (or in spite) of our relation with others, and their lasting significance becomes a part of our stories. Since that time, I have heard Leonard's ragged, cigarette strained voice singing these lines time and again in my mind. As I am writing this section on carving out space in the academy for Indigenous ways of researching, I hear Leonard reassuring me… "there is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in"… and I think it is not impossible for Indigenous researchers to crack open the spaces in the academy for our own way of knowing… it is only hard. Yet there are protective factors that make creating space for an Indigenous approach to research (specifically graduate research) a bit easier and I would like to briefly comment on some of them.

The Importance of Indigenous Faculty

In reflecting upon strategies for creating space of diversity within academia, Sharene Razack points out that numbers matter and the "we might consider increasing the numbers as our pre-eminent strategy of difference" (2001, p. 53). Having a core group of Indigenous faculty in the varied programs within university settings who can instruct, mentor and supervise Indigenous

graduate students is a necessary strategy for creating space for Indigenous methodologies. In my course of studies I was fortunate to have three Indigenous faculty involved in my program, two who were coursework instructors and one who is a member of my committee. I could recount the merits of having Indigenous faculty to support Indigenous graduate students involved in research; however that is a paper in and of itself and I will just offer my testimony as an Indigenous graduate student: Indigenous faculty matter. I will note that of these three Indigenous people involved in my program, all three were men and I did miss the formal involvement of Indigenous women faculty. That being said, I have two strong Indigenous women colleagues who are also enrolled in PhD studies and this has allowed us to have a supportive cohort. Having a supportive academic Indigenous community allows for intriguing discussions around Indigenous research and the presence of community makes doctoral work feel less isolating.

Indigenous Research Instruction and Curriculum

In 1994, the University of British Columbia conducted a study on the recruitment and retention of Indigenous students within schools of social work. They interviewed individuals from the University of Victoria and Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (now the First Nations University of Canada) Social Work programs, the schools were chosen because they had experience in attracting and retaining Indigenous students. Findings from the interviews highlighted the importance of Indigenous tenure track faculty and curriculum that validated the life experiences of the Indigenous students (Christensen Pigler, 1994). This points to the general role of research coursework and instruction within graduate programs. In most graduate programs, particularly at the Master level, a research methodology and/or knowledge and inquiry course is

required. The methodology course, in specific, can be intimidating as it has a tendency to be imbued with linearity inherent in the social science research paradigm. For Indigenous students, these courses can be alienating and isolating as attempts to incorporate an Indigenous approach to research can be frustrating for both student and instructor. There are at least two required responses to this situation, the first being the integration of Indigenous methodologies into general research courses as an integral component of the curriculum rather than as an ad hoc item. The more challenging, but I believe equally critical option, is the development of an Indigenous research course that is available to Indigenous graduate students on a consistent basis for general, not just Indigenous-specific, programs within the university.

Recently the School of Social Work at the University of Victoria offered a Master level Indigenous social work research course. A goal of the course was to encompass the varied knowledge sources that influence knowledge construction. The curriculum included an experiential and cultural field trip gifting us with the opportunity to walk the ancestral trails on Cowichan lands (a Coast Salish First Nation on Vancouver Island) with a Cowichan cultural guide. As we were walking by the river, among the ancient trees, we were able to embrace an energy and way of knowing that simply cannot be replicated in a classroom. As for the classroom, the research articles for the curriculum were primarily by Indigenous writers and the assignments allowed for students to explore their own conceptual framework based on their own life experiences. Throughout the course we were able to address the four key themes mentioned earlier in this paper while taking the space we needed for the conversation. Students were able to make visible their own worldview, and link it with their methodological approach to research. This course was co-instructed by

Indigenous and non-Indigenous instructor as per the school of social work's policy that there must be an Indigenous instructor for Indigenous courses – and, besides it just makes sense. I include reference to course development and instruction, because curriculum can be an amazing tool for carving space for different ways of knowing.

Allies in the Academy

The point that Indigenous research in universities and Graduate Studies Faculties and Senior Administration are connected needs further mention. As more and more Indigenous students are entering into Master and PhD level programs of study, of which research is central, the need for more Indigenous faculty to supervise, sit on committees and generally support Indigenous graduate students is becoming more pressing and urgent. From my own perspective as an Indigenous student and from an instructional perspective, I believe that having an Indigenous supervisor and/or member on every Indigenous student's graduate committee is simply good pedagogy (and research practice). From this angle, my sense is that Graduate Studies and Senior Administration (in addition to respective departments, schools and faculties) has a role in the recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty, and the mentoring and support of existing Indigenous faculty as a means to nurture Indigenous graduate research. In this way, Graduate Studies Departments and Senior Administration can become key partners with the existing Indigenous faculty, who are few in number and increasingly over-extended, in creating space within the academy for Indigenous graduate research.

With respect to allies within the university, I have been connected with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty who not only believe, but are about, creating space for different ways of knowing within the university setting. I have had the privilege – and I do mean privilege – of having coursework instructors and faculty on my committee who are supportive in a fundamental way. The folks on my committee seem to have the rare combination of challenging mainstream academic ideologies while having influence inside its walls – this helps big time in carving space.

I have focused on the positive experiences, a blueprint for creating space which shows options that work for supporting Indigenous graduate research and Indigenous research in general. The deal is that there needs to be active engagement with the blueprint, and to that end claiming space will demand a significant amount of energy and strategic pacing by Indigenous people and their allies. Making space is not impossible, it is only hard.

Concluding Comments

During the final course of my doctoral studies I did what Eber Hampton, Vine Deloria, and others have suggested. I thought about my own story and my motives for doing this research. In opening the medicine bundle of memory, I allowed myself to critically examine the privileges of my life, and for the first time allowed myself to grieve for the losses. When I came out of the experience, a little shaky, I knew that I needed to go home to do my research, to be with family, to walk on my sacred plains under its forever skies, to see ancient medicine wheel formations, and just be for awhile. While my research does not necessitate that I return to Saskatchewan, I do want

to spend time learning my Plains Cree language and talking with folks, but mostly I just need to be among the people and the land while I listen, think, feel and write. I am not sure what is to unfold, but I know that not going home just isn't an option. It is about being open to what Roxanne Struthers refers to as sacred research; it is about that spiritual, metaphysical variable of Indigenous methodology that my ancestors have been nudging me to go see about.

The University of Victoria sits on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish, and in Hul'q'umi'num' (the language of the area) the word for thank-you is *Hychka,* it means I lift my hands up to you. In closing I want to acknowledge the resiliency of Indigenous students, instructors, course developers, researchers, staff, and allies who are working within university settings and are actively creating space for Indigenous ways of knowing. From the territory on which I am writing this paper: *Hychka* – I lift my hands up to you.

Miigwech and Kitatamihin

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